

To the Rev Samuel M
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preparing
C. W.

MR. HAVEN'S
S E R M O N

AT THE
O R D I N A T I O N
OF THE
Rev. Stephen Palmer.



Stephen Palmer of
Needham

of
Needham Parish

THE AUTHOR,

*DEDICATES the following Discourse
to the Reverend STEPHEN PALMER, at
whose desire it was preached; and to the
PEOPLE under his pastoral care, at whose
request, and expense, it is published;
with affectionate wishes, for their pros-
perity and happiness; and that they may
long be mutual blessings to each other, in
their present connexion.*



A
S E R M O N,

PREACHED AT NEEDHAM,

NOVEMBER 7, 1792;

WHEN THE

REV. STEPHEN PALMER

WAS ORDAINED PASTOR OF THE CHURCH, AND
FIRST SOCIETY IN SAID TOWN.

BY JASON HAVEN, A.M.

PASTOR OF THE FIRST CHURCH IN
DEDHAM.

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AN ORDINATION
SERMON.

2 TIMOTHY ii, 2.

AND THE THINGS WHICH THOU HAST HEARD OF ME,
AMONG MANY WITNESSES, THE SAME COMMIT
THOU TO FAITHFUL MEN, WHO SHALL BE ABLE
TO TEACH OTHERS ALSO.

THE Apostle Paul employs no small part of his epistles, to Timothy, and Titus, in giving directions for the introduction of proper persons into the work of the evangelical ministry, and for the due performance of the duties of that station. If we are not able minutely to determine, how far the character and office of these *first ministers* of Christ may apply to *christian pastors* and *teachers*, at the present day, yet all will allow, that it is especially from these epistles, that we are to collect what the duties of the pastoral office are; and what qualifications are requisite in those who enter into it. Two leading ones, which may indeed be comprehensive of all others, we find in the words which I have

have now read. FAITHFULNESS and ABILITY. They must be "Faithful men, able to teach others." To such only *Timothy* is directed to commit the gospel, as a sacred deposit.

BY the expression, *the things which thou hast heard of me before many witnesses*, the Apostle undoubtedly intends *the gospel*, in the great doctrines and duties of which, *Timothy* had been instructed by him. *The same*, says he, *commit thou to faithful men*. This passage hath often been adduced, by episcopal writers, as an argument, that the people are to have no voice in chusing their religious teachers. *Timothy*, they say, was Bishop of Ephesus. In him was vested the sole power of setting ministers over certain churches, within his diocese. I humbly conceive the passage contains no argument of this sort. It only proves that *Timothy* had power to ordain. This he had as an *Elder*, or *Bishop*, which terms, every honest man, acquainted with the original language of the New Testament, must acknowledge are used to denote the same office. There is no intimation, that the people had not liberty to chuse their ministers, and present them to *Timothy*, who was authorized to set them apart to the work, to which they had been chosen, by ordaining them, and solemnly committing to them the gospel of Christ.

IT seems he was to be acquainted with the characters of those to whom he committed this important trust; and be satisfied that they were *faithful men*, and *able to teach*. It will be the business of the following discourse, to explain *these qualifications*, and then to add some practical remarks, and particular addresses, suitable to the subject, and to the present occasion.

First, they who are introduced into the office of public christian teachers, must be *faithful men*.
Faithfulness

Faithfulness signifies sincerity and uprightness, by which temper of mind a person should be influenced, both in *entering into the pastoral office at first*; and in *performing all the duties of it*, through the course of his ministry.

FAITHFULNESS implies sincere, good, and upright views, and motives, *in entering into this sacred employment*. The faithful man's desire and design must be, the promotion of the great ends of the gospel ministry, which are to honour God; to build up the kingdom of Christ, and advance the salvation of men.

NOW, in order to his being truly governed by these motives, is it not evidently necessary, that he be a man of real goodness of heart, of undissembled piety and religion? Must not a man, who is destitute of renewing grace, if he is acquainted with the springs of action, in his own mind, be sensible, that he hath no real concern for the glory of God, and the advancement of the kingdom of his Son? How can he then, from upright and faithful motives, take upon him the pastoral office? Can he honestly consider himself qualified to serve Christ, in this employment, when he hath no consciousness of a sincere affection to him? Can he view himself as a fit person, to preach those doctrines, which are, in general, disagreeable to the governing temper of his mind; and the sanctifying influence of which, he hath not experienced on his own heart? Can he justly conceive, that he is a suitable instrument, to inculcate and promote, that holy, spiritual, and divine life, to which he is a stranger, and which he refuses to maintain? Certainly not.

MUST not that faithfulness then, which should possess a man who enters into the work of the ministry, imply that he finds in himself, a sincere and ardent love to his divine Master, in whose service he

— he is engaging ? That he hath diligently endeavoured to become acquainted with that service, and feels an affection to it ? That he hath reason to think that, through grace, he is in some good measure qualified to perform it ? And that he finds a readiness to devote all his powers and abilities to it ? And finally, that he hath formed solemn resolutions to promote it to the utmost of his capacity, depending on the spirit and grace of Christ to assist him in, and carry him through it ? Will not such be the views, and motives of the faithful man, in undertaking the work of the gospel ministry ?

FAITHFULNESS will also appear in *prosecuting this work*, and performing all the parts of it. Let me here mention some particulars.

1. HE will be faithful in his studies, that he may rightly understand the doctrines and duties of that holy religion of which he is a teacher. His studies indeed must have been employed upon these subjects, previous to his undertaking the work ; otherwise he could not undertake it with integrity and uprightness. But his diligence in studying the sacred scriptures, before he took upon him the pastoral charge, will not excuse him from it, through the whole course of his ministry. There will always be room for improvement in religious knowledge. If his mind is agreeably furnished, it may, by proper industry, be more richly and abundantly furnished, with those treasures of wisdom and knowledge which are inexhaustible, in the sacred oracles. He will not imagine that he hath arrived at perfection, in his acquaintance with divine truth, and that there is no room for further light, to enter into his mind.

FIDELITY in studying the inspired writings, will dispose him carefully to guard against all prepossessions, in favour of, or in opposition to, particular religious

religious tenets. He will not, as may be too much the case with some, search the scriptures, with a view to find arguments, in support of a system of doctrine, which he had before adopted; or endeavour to force them to speak a language agreeable to it; but he will yield himself up to the word of God, to be led by its light, though in consequence of it, he should be obliged to renounce some favourite sentiment, which he had long entertained, or to embrace others, against which he had been prejudiced. He will take his religious opinions from the sacred volume, and not wrest it, in order to vindicate those which he had before adopted.

DILIGENCE in his studies will also be necessary, in order to provide useful entertainment for the people of his charge; from one season of public instruction to another. He could not content himself, if he could them, by delivering broken incoherent discourses, which cost him no labour. He will prepare "Beaten oil for the sanctuary;" well studied and correct compositions, suited to impart clear light, and important edification. This is one thing, in which his *faithfulness* will appear.

2. IT will also, by a care to preach the pure uncorrupted gospel. He will not be of *those who corrupt the word of God, or handle it deceitfully.* 2 Cor. xi, 17. He will take heed to his doctrine, and endeavour to *show uncorruptness.*

INDDED the most upright and faithful minister may be mistaken, in his apprehension, in some less weighty points in theology; and may deliver sentiments, not perfectly consonant to the standard of divine truth: But this will not be through want of desire to know the truth, as it is in Jesus, or of industry, in searching for it. He will not voluntarily advance error, or mislead his people, in the

smallest article of faith, or practice. And his fidelity will undoubtedly preserve him from dangerous and fundamental errors. Being disposed to do the will of his divine Master, he will assist him to know his doctrine.

3. HE will discover his faithfulness, in delivering the whole truth. It will be his desire, as it was the Apostles', to declare to his people all the counsel of God, and to keep back nothing that would be profitable to them. Acts xx, 20. He will not artfully conceal certain truths, to answer a particular purpose. Nor will he dwell continually on others, because he can discourse on them with more ease, and less study; or because they are more grateful to his hearers, and tend to render him popular. This would not consist with faithfulness to God, and to the souls committed to his charge; yet I may add,

4. THAT he will aim to treat, most frequently, on those subjects which he considers, as peculiarly weighty, and necessary to the edification of his people. All christian doctrines are not equally useful and important. There are the *weightier matters* of the gospel, as well as of the law, both as to faith and practice. These he will make the most frequent subject of his public discourses. It would be too assuming in me to attempt to determine what these are. Permit me, however, modestly to suggest, that among these, I conceive are to be numbered, the apostacy of the human race by the disobedience of their first progenitors; the gospel method of man's recovery through the mediation of Christ; the terms of the gospel covenant, which are, repentance towards God, faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, and evangelical obedience; the work of the holy Spirit in renewing the hearts of men; the progress of holiness through the christian life; those instru-
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mental duties, and ordinances, which tend to beget and increase true grace ; the moral and positive precepts of christianity ; the important change by death ; the judgment of the great day ; and a future state of rewards and punishments. These will generally take place of matters of smaller importance : And these will exclude *questions foolish and unlearned*, and a strife about words, which tend rather to *subvert the hearers*, than to promote *godly edifying*.

5. THE christian minister should shew his faithfulness, by accommodating his instructions to the different characters and circumstances of his people. He will endeavour to " Approve himself to God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, by rightly dividing the word, and giving to every one his portion in due season." 2 Timothy ii, xv.

THOSE of tender age, whose faculties are not matured, he will teach, with condescension and gentleness, the first and easy principles of religion ; as babes are fed with milk, affording a soft and easy nourishment. Thus he will obey the command of Christ, " Feed my lambs," and imitate the example of the gentle shepherd, who " Gathers the lambs in his arms, and carries them in his bosom." Isa. xl, 11.

STRONG meat will he prepare for those of riper age, those doctrines which their matured minds, and improved understandings, are able to comprehend, and apply for their several uses in the christian life.

THE secure and thoughtless he will endeavour to awaken and persuade, by the terrors of the Lord ; and by an alarming representation of their danger ; while they continue in impenitency and unbelief, that they may be excited to fly for refuge to the hope set before them, before it be too late.

ARE any under deep concern of mind about their spiritual state, brought to a lively conviction of their
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sin and guilt ; and in the language of our Saviour, " Weary and heavy laden ;" he will endeavour to lead them to Him, by the gentle and alluring invitations of his gospel, that they may " Find rest to their souls." He will labour to comfort mourners in Sion ; to " Lift up the hands that hang down, and to strengthen the feeble knees," by administering the reviving cordials of Christ's religion.

THE providential circumstances, under which particular families, or persons are, will engage the attention of the faithful watchman ; and by occasional discourses, adapted to their situation, he will strive to assist them in making a good and religious improvement, both of prosperous and afflictive dispensations.

NOR will he neglect to explain and inculcate relative duties, and what may be called *the duties of the times*, which hold an important place, in practical religion. To these he will warmly urge a due regard, that all may fill their several places and stations, with propriety and usefulness. On this the beauty and comfort of social life greatly depend, whether in small family-circles, or in larger societies, and extensive communities.

WITH courage and plainness, he will reprove the openly vicious ; knowing that there is a time to " Rebuke sharply," as well as to " Instruct with meekness."

6. A GOOD minister will shew his faithfulness, by the *manner*, as well as by the *matter* of his preaching. He will be careful to use *such a style*, as is suited to the capacity of his hearers, that they may easily enter into his meaning, and improve by his discourses. This will engage him, on the one hand, to avoid language which is incorrect, low and vulgar ; and on the other, that which is abstruse, or towering, and bombastic,

bombastic, and crowded with technical terms, and phrases, above the comprehension of men in common life. He will consider himself as "Debtor to the learned and the unlearned."

HE will aim at such earnestness, animation and pathos, in the turn of his compositions, and in his speaking, as tend to engage and fix the attention of his audience, and to impress their minds with a sense of the importance of what is delivered. He will endeavour to have his voice duly modulated, his manner of pronunciation, unaffected and natural, and his gesture easy and graceful. These things, if not of so much consequence as what hath been mentioned before, yet are not of so trifling consideration, as to fall below the notice of a faithful minister. But the *pulpit* will not be the only place in which his faithfulness will display itself. I may add,

7. HE will shew it by a care to maintain a regular christian discipline in the church. He will guard against assuming more rule and authority, than belong to his office; against "Lording it over God's heritage." At the same time, he will not meanly cringe to the humours of his people, but will "Magnify his office," and be known in his place.

HE will examine, with faithfulness and candour, those who seek admission to church-privileges, governing himself herein wholly by the rules of the gospel. In the administration of the seals and censures of Christ's church, he will labour to conduct with such integrity and prudence, that all, if possible, may be convinced, that he "Doth nothing through partiality."

Finally. HE will shew himself faithful, in all the more private duties of his profession. He will be easy of access to all who apply to him, for counsel and advice in their spiritual concerns, and labour to
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 speak a word in season to them. He will studiously avoid all haughty and forbidding airs ; but on the contrary will shew such familiarity and condescension, as will conciliate the love of his people, without exposing him to contempt. He will seek, by frequent visits, to know the state of his flock, both, that he may have opportunity to give private advice and instruction, and also that he may be the better able to accommodate his public discourses to their several cases and circumstances. He will take a kind and sympathetic part with them in their troubles ; and be no stranger to houses of mourning and chambers of sickness. He will diligently lay hold on such occasions, when their hearts are made tender and impressible, by the rod of God upon them, to speak to them of the concerns of their souls, and of another world. He will “ Weep with those that weep,” and so “ Bear their burdens as to fulfil the law of Christ.” In a word,

HE will labour to be “ An example to the flock, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, and in purity.” 1 Tim. iv, 12. It will be his care to go before them, in the uniform practice of all the virtues of a christian life, that there may be a happy agreement between his doctrine and behaviour, and that they may be instructed by the latter as well as the former. The minister who is negligent in this, must be very much wanting in faithfulness to God, to his people, and to his own soul. He will, as it were, pull down, with one hand, what he builds up with the other. A careless, irregular walk and conversation will prevent the good influence of his preaching, and probably do more to obstruct, than the other to promote “ Pure religion and undefiled, before God and the Father.” I proceed to consider the

SECOND *qualification* of a gospel minister, mentioned in the text. *Ability to teach.* The time will not allow

allow me to enlarge on this ; and there may be the less occasion for it, as several thoughts have been already suggested, in speaking of a minister's *faithfulness*, which would have naturally occurred under this head. A man very deficient in *ability to teach*, could not act an *upright* and *faithful* part, in endeavouring to get into the sacred employment. Nor can several of those articles of fidelity, which have been mentioned, be exhibited by a person of very small abilities. With great propriety, therefore, the Apostle unites *faithfulness*, and *ability to teach*, as necessary to meet in the person, qualified for the pastoral office. What I conceive proper to be said on the *latter* of these, will be included in the three following particulars.

I. HE must be endowed with good natural powers of mind. However unable we may be to assign a philosophical reason for it, yet the thing is indisputable, that men's intellectual powers of mind are not all of the same strength and size. Whether it be owing to the different structure of those parts of the animal frame, which are peculiarly employed in mental exercises, or to some other latent cause, still it is evident, that men are not all equally capable of thinking, reasoning, understanding, and acquiring knowledge. Those of very small and low mental powers cannot be justly considered as fit for the ministerial office. They are not *so able to teach*, as those ought to be, who act in this character of public instructors. However pious and faithful they may be in their disposition, it is not to be supposed, that they can make such acquirements, in useful knowledge, particularly of the holy scriptures, as to enable them to teach others, to advantage and edification, in the things of religion. Their small abilities may be useful in some other department.

I MEAN

I MEAN not to intimate, that none may be useful, as public religious teachers, whose talents are not of the first weight and magnitude, and who are not of very shining and distinguished parts. But the greater their abilities are, if they are sanctified by God's grace, and made faithful men, the more useful, we may reasonably expect they will be. But men whose natural powers of mind are below the generality of their brethren of mankind, ought not to be encouraged to enter into the sacred work.

2. A MAN should have some special advantages of education, in order to be *able so to teach*, as to qualify him for the evangelical ministry. I do not say that what we call a *liberal, collegiate* education, is in all cases, without exception, necessary; though I conceive this to be very desirable, and the want of it, hardly to be dispensed with, where it may be obtained, and with so little difficulty, as in our land. Is it not dangerous to the interest of religion, and to the prosperity of the churches of Christ, to countenance an illiterate clergy? Men of that order, are, in a measure, set for the defence of the gospel, against infidels, and gainsayers. That they can be but poorly able to defend it, must be obvious to all who properly consider the matter, if they have no more than what we call common learning. An acquaintance with the liberal arts and sciences, greatly enlarges and improves the powers of the mind. It enables men to arrange their ideas properly; to reason clearly and forcibly, upon any subject; to detect sophistry, and to judge of the conclusiveness of an argument.

KNOWLEDGE of the learned languages, particularly of those in which the sacred scriptures were originally penned, must be very useful to a christian teacher. It will assist him more clearly to understand

stand the inspired writings ; to solve difficulties which may occur in them, and to point out their beauty and harmony.

AT least, a man must have had, and must have improved, opportunities and helps to study the sacred oracles, in order to understand the great truths contained in them, in their connexion and mutual dependence. A superficial student of the scriptures cannot deserve those characters, which should meet in every public religious teacher, of "A scribe well instructed to the kingdom of heaven ;" "An able minister of the New Testament."

IT is such a pitch of enthusiasm, as I trust none of you will attempt to defend, for ministers to expect that their minds should be furnished with knowledge, by the immediate teachings of the holy Spirit ; or that those truths should be given them directly from above, which they are to deliver to their people.

IT is incumbent on men, before they enter on the sacred work, as well as through the whole course of it, to "Give themselves to reading, meditation and prayer." In this way they may expect the aids and teachings of the spirit of God ; in this way "their profiting will appear to all ;" and they will be able to teach, so as to promote godly edifying. I only add,

3. A MAN must have a good faculty of communicating his knowledge. The gift of utterance is valuable, and necessary to teachers. This is not always found in proportion to the knowledge with which men's minds are stored ; therefore we cannot say that every man, of piety and learning, is qualified to be a gospel minister. The "Priest's lips are to preserve," and communicate "knowledge." He should have the "tongue," as well as the mind of "the learned." This qualification is possessed in various degrees by different persons. Some good

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measure of it may be deemed requisite, in one who is, by office, a public religious instructor. It is a happy acquirement, to be able with ease, freedom, and perspicuity, to communicate his sentiments, not only to the understanding of the learned and judicious few, but to that of persons of common abilities, and small literary improvements. This talent will, like most others, increase and brighten, by use, which should be an encouragement to those who are conscious that they do not possess it, in so happy a degree as many around them, to take much pains that it may grow and increase in them.

IT is of great importance for persons, when first setting out in the business of preaching, to get into a way of composing, and speaking, with ease and propriety. This being neglected at first, and a habit, the reverse of this, being once established, the longest life will seldom afford sufficient time to correct and unlearn it.

“APT to teach” is a qualification of so much importance as to be recommended by an inspired pen. Who can need it more than persons employed in teaching things of everlasting moment; and yet things which, through the dulness of some, and the perverseness of others, are hard to be introduced into the minds and consciences of most men? He who hath a due solicitude for the edification of his people, will strive by all the advantages of address; to bring gospel truths home to their hearts, with power and energy; and to fasten them there, as with “A nail in a sure place,” that he “may be to them a favour of life unto life, and not of death unto death.”

WHAT hath been imperfectly suggested, must suffice to represent the persons, suitable to be employed in the gospel ministry. By way of reflection,

1. DOth it not appear important, from what hath been said, that we who are invited, from time to time, to assist in setting apart men to the work of the gospel ministry, should be careful not to introduce any, who do not appear to be *faithful men, and able to teach others* ? Is it not requisite that we be satisfied as to their *fidelity* and *capacity* ? The question then will arise, how are we to obtain this satisfaction ?

SOME worthy men, with a view to exclude errors, in faith, and to maintain christian orthodoxy, conceive a critical examination into the religious sentiments of those who are candidates for ordination, to be very necessary ; and that creeds, and confessions of faith to be assented to, or subscribed, answer very valuable purposes. Others suppose very little can be done, in this way, towards maintaining purity of faith, and uniformity in religious sentiments. It may be said that the language, in which such *tests* are expressed, will be as indeterminate as that of the holy scriptures ; and that without an infallible interpreter, to fix the meaning of the one and the other, we shall be never the nearer the object of pursuit. It hath been also observed, that ministers of the *church of England*, who are invariably obliged to subscribe a long catalogue of articles, are not more *sound in the faith*, or more united in their religious opinions, than others. Some further suppose, an implication in this practice, not very honourary to the Author of our religion, viz. that he hath left the *credenda* of it, or *things to be believed*, so loose and vague, as to render a greater precision and determinateness necessary to be added, by the wisdom and sagacity of uninspired men ; and that the “ Words which the Holy Ghost teacheth,” do not afford so clear and unequivocal a system of gospel truth, as “ The words which man’s wisdom teacheth.” 1 Cor. xi, 13.

AS to this matter, it seems that men equally solicitous for maintaining the purity of the faith, once delivered to the saints, and equally desirous to promote the honour and utility of the preached gospel, are not entirely agreed. However, I doubt not, they will very well agree, in the most important steps to be taken in this matter. They will all judge it necessary, in order to make the path of duty plain before them, in setting apart men to the work of the ministry, that they obtain satisfactory evidence, that they are of a good moral and religious character ; of good intellectual abilities ; and that they have enjoyed, and improved, some special advantages of education.

2. IS it not reasonable for us, my brethren, who have been put into the gospel ministry, to inquire, on this occasion, whether we entered upon it with proper views, and from proper motives ? And whether, under the influence of them, we have faithfully attended to all the parts of our duty ? I would hope that, upon a review of our temper and conduct, we stand acquitted, by our own consciences, of any habitual and allowed unfaithfulness. But alas ! have we not found ourselves too prone to slothfulness, in that work which requires the greatest diligence and fervency ? Have we not reason to acknowledge, and lament many sinful defects ? Are we not called to humble ourselves before God, this day, on account of them ? To renew our resolutions to be steadfast and unmoveable, abounding always in the work of the Lord ? And importunately to seek fresh supplies of wisdom and grace, from Jesus Christ, in whom all fulness dwells ?

3. FROM what hath been suggested, our beloved young friends, who are candidates for the gospel ministry, will be led to consider the qualifications, they

they should endeavour to be possessed of, in order to enter upon that important work. You must be sensible of the impropriety and danger of contenting yourselves with small furniture and preparation for an employment so great and arduous. To be faithful is of the last importance. The noble and excellent motives of love to Christ, and ardent desires to advance his religion, and the good of precious souls, operating properly, will encourage you to enter yourselves as labourers in Christ's vineyard, though the prospects of temporal emolument are but small; and will support you under the many difficulties and discouragements to be met with in it.

IT is reasonable that "They who preach the gospel should live of the gospel. So hath Christ ordained in his churches." You are not to be censured, as of a mercenary temper, and as *hirelings*, in a bad sense, because in entering into this service, you have a regard to a decent and honourable support. But the motives, which I mentioned before, being predominant, will render your labours, labours of love, which, in a great measure, carry their own reward with them. May the great Lord of the harvest send forth a plenty of faithful labourers into his harvest!

I NOW turn myself to my young friend, who hath desired me to be his monitor on this solemn and joyful occasion.

YOU will easily see, dear Sir, from the instances that have been mentioned, in which a minister should shew himself faithful, that you must give up a life of sloth and indolence, or be greatly wanting in fidelity to God, to this people, and to your own soul. I hope you act from proper motives in undertaking this great work. Take heed that these motives be kept present to your mind, that they may never lose their influence upon you.

HERE

HERE is a large number of precious and immortal souls, who now commit themselves to your pastoral care. It is incumbent on you "To watch for them as expecting to give account." They have a right to the faithful improvement of your time, and best abilities. They profess a love and esteem for you. Let love and esteem be mutual between them and you. This will lighten your burdens, and carry you more cheerfully through your work. Think nothing too much to do, to promote their spiritual good, since Christ did not think his blood too precious to be shed, for their redemption. Be willing to spend, and be spent in their service.

MY acquaintance with this people makes me confident, that you will find them of a candid and teachable disposition. They have too much judgment, and have been too well instructed heretofore, to wish you to dwell much in your discourses on knotty points of controversy, and matters of doubtful disputation, or metaphysical niceties, and curious distinctions, which tend rather to perplex than to edify. A serious, practical, evangelical method of preaching, will be most agreeable to them. Your judgment and inclination will happily coincide with their's in this thing. Herein you will follow the example of your late worthy father, deceased ;* under whose public and private instructions, your youthful days have been spent, I trust, not only much to your comfort, but greatly to your advantage in preparing you for the due discharge of the duties of that profession, in which he was so many years engaged. Herein you will also imitate the pattern of your predecessors in this place.

LABOUR,

* He was pastor of the church in Norton for about thirty-eight years.

LABOUR, by plain, serious and fervent addressees, to bring divine truths home to the hearts and consciences of your hearers ; that sinners may be awakened, convinced, and made willing to accept the mercy of God through Christ, as offered to them in the glorious gospel ; and that saints may be quickened, comforted, and built up, in their most holy faith. The work is great and arduous. Great assistance, and great comfort, you may expect in it, if you are faithful. Often recollect, for your encouragement and support, who hath said, " My grace is sufficient for you." Be strong then, my son, in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

OFTEN anticipate in your thoughts the approaching day, when your work will be finished, and you will meet those, who have been the people of your charge, at the bar of our final Judge. One serious thought of this kind, will be powerful, to break the force of a thousand temptations to sloth and unfaithfulness. Bear in mind the uncertainty of life, and how short your opportunity may be, in which you can do any thing for the good of your dear people. I wish you, my dear friend, great success in your labours. May God make them instrumental of saving good to many souls ; and grant, that " Having turned many to righteousness, you may shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever."

IN the next place, I take the freedom to address the beloved Church and Society, in this place.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

WHEN I profess to feel myself tenderly interested in your welfare, I trust my sincerity will not be suspected. I have been, for about thirty seven years, ministering to a beloved and kind people, nearly connected with you, and from among whom your
ancestors

ancestors principally proceeded.* The Rev. *Joseph Belcher*, my venerable, though not immediate predecessor, assisted in embodying this church, and preached, on that occasion, from those words. Titus ii, 14. *A peculiar people, zealous of good works.* Perhaps he might view the words, as in a good degree, characteristic of your ancestors, then living. I wish they may be of their posterity.† In his records of baptisms, and admissions into church-fellowship, now in my hands, I find the ‡ names of many respectable families still among you. He assisted in the introduction of your first minister, whose memory is dear to me, as I trust it is to many of you. He acted the part of a father and guide to me, when I came, young and unexperienced, into this neighbourhood. I mourned with you, when he was taken from your head. In your settlement of another pastor, and in all the changes through which you have since passed, whether prosperous, or afflictive, I have taken a sympathetic part with you. And I now sincerely rejoice with you, as I doubt not all the

* *Needham* was set off from *Dedham*, and incorporated as a town, in the year 1711.

† Here the preacher introduced another anecdote concerning the Rev. Mr. Belcher. The design of it was, to shew the favourable opinion he had of this church and society, in its infant state, and his concern to prevent a man's becoming their pastor, whose abilities were small, and his character doubtful; and that they might obtain one able and faithful. He had the satisfaction of seeing his wishes accomplished, when the Rev. Mr. *Townsend* was settled among them.

‡ Such as, Fisher, Newell, Fuller, Kingsbury, Metcalf, Mills, Ware, Paine, Dewing, Gay, Okinton, and others. A considerable part of the present inhabitants of *Needham*, and equally respectable as those whose names are mentioned above, have come into the town since, from other places.

the members of the ecclesiastical council do, whom you have invited hither, on the present occasion, that, after a season of darkness and perplexity, you have been led, in answer to your humble prayers, so peaceably, and unanimously to chuse a pastor, who, we hope, will approve himself one after God's own heart.

BEHOLD THE MAN, who is, this day, devoting himself, his time, and strength, to the service of God and your souls. From a particular acquaintance with him, I am led to believe that he enters on this arduous work, from truly christian motives, and that he will endeavour, by the help of divine grace, to be faithful in the performance of it. Shall I bespeak your affection to him? I trust he already enjoys it. Cease not to give him substantial evidences of it, by treating his person and character with tenderness and respect; by praying for him, with constancy and fervour; by attending his ministrations, with candour and meekness; and by making ready and PUNCTUAL provision for his comfortable support.

I HOPE you will find united in him, a good share of that gravity, that humility, that circumspect and exemplary conduct, which so eminently appeared in your first minister; and of that free and easy address; of that pleasant and sociable turn, which are agreeable traits in the character of your late pastor.

FROM gross failings, I trust, through grace, he will keep himself. His human infirmities you will cover with a mantle of love. Let no jealousies, and suspicions be entertained to his disadvantage. Let nothing deprive him of your esteem, short of full proof that he is become unworthy of it; and then, I hope he will enjoy it to his latest moments. Give him not occasion, my dear friends, by your disregard to his

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pious instructions, and unprofitableness under his ministry, to complain that "He labours in vain and spends his strength for naught." This will weaken his hands and discourage his heart. But remember that while this gives him present grief, it may be the foundation of everlasting sorrow to you. We wish you may enjoy a rich and lasting blessing in him; that many of you, and of your children may have reason to view him as a spiritual father, he "Having begotten you to God through the gospel." And that he may be able to say, in the great day of Christ's appearing, "Lord here am I, and the children which thou hast given me." And so that ye may be each other's "Crown of rejoicing in the day of the Lord Jesus."

I SHALL close with a few words to this whole assembly. You have heard, my brethren, some of the articles, in which your ministers should shew themselves faithful. They are especially bound to do so, in preaching to you JESUS CHRIST, and the gospel method of salvation through him. This is the main point in which their instructions are to centre. Instructions of this kind, have you not all long enjoyed? The great inquiry, which I would wish every one to make, is this? "Have I been brought to know Jesus Christ, with that knowledge which renews the heart, and reforms the life?" If you have not, to what valuable purpose have you sat under the preached gospel? If you continue practically ignorant of this only Redeemer of lost men, your condemnation will be awfully aggravated, by the means of religious instruction afforded to you. O, my friends, there is no time to trifle in this matter. The day and means of grace will soon be at an end with you. Be entreated to "Consider in this your day, the things which belong to your peace, before they are hid from your eyes."

As to those of you, who have been "Born of incorruptible seed, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever," certainly you must have an ardent affection to the sacred truths of the gospel. Having "Tasted that the Lord is gracious," you will like "New born babes desire the sincere milk of the word that you may grow thereby." You will hardly need urging to a steady and devout attendance on the preached gospel. This you know is a method appointed, by the great Head of the church, to feed and nourish your inward man, and to build you up in all the graces and comforts of the spiritual and divine life. Have you obtained that "Precious faith" which "cometh by hearing?" Let the Apostle's exhortation be acceptable to you. "Add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and charity; for if these things be in you and abound, they will make you, that ye shall be neither barren, nor unfruitful, in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. So an entrance shall be administered to you abundantly, into his heavenly and eternal kingdom." A M E N.

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Charge by the THE
C H A R G E,
Reverend Mr BY THE

Reverend Mr. ELLIS,
OF REHOBOTH.

AS the *Church and People*, in this place, have unanimously elected you, STEPHEN PALMER, to settle with them, in the work of the gospel ministry; as you also have accepted their invitation; and as the council, regularly called, solemnly to set you apart, for this important purpose, are satisfied with your natural, acquired, and religious furniture, We, the ministers of the Lord Jesus Christ, commissioned from him, do, by prayer and the imposition of hands, ordain you a bishop, in the visible church of God, which he has set up on earth, and of which Christ is King and Head. In particular we commit, to your pastoral care and oversight, the flock and congregation of the first parish in Needham, with authority to dispense the gospel, and to act in every branch of the ministerial office. We therefore charge you, in the name of our divine Master, to the best of your skill and abilities, to discharge all the duties, incumbent upon one, in sacred orders. Preach the word.

word. Faithfully explain the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments; ever bearing in mind, that for the right understanding of them, the plain and obvious meaning, as much as may be, is to be adhered to. They ought to be taken literally, where there is no necessity of understanding them otherwise. This will free you from much trouble. It will save your hearers from perplexity. It will be guarding against the needless disputes and errors of the present day.

Preach the word in its purity. Urge the absolute necessity of faith, repentance, and new obedience. These, in the idea of them, include whatever is requisite to the salvation of men. Be not wise above what is written. Darken not counsel by words, without knowledge, as the manner of some is. Make not unintelligible distinctions, which have a tendency to excite animosities, cause rents and schisms in christian societies, and destroy that catholicism and charity, which are true characteristics of the disciples of the compassionate Saviour. Remember that you are to adapt your discourses to the capacities, cases, and circumstances of your hearers, as much as possible. They should, therefore, be plain and practical. Let the Bible be your guide and counsellor. Make the oracles of God your compass, by which to direct your course, through all the changing scenes of life; then you will call no man master; and not shun to declare the whole counsel of God, relative to the fall and pollution of human nature, and the way of recovery to purity and happiness, through the atoning blood of Jesus. Preach Christ and him crucified. Keep yourself in the love of God. Look well to your own soul. Walk circumspectly. Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Keep close
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to your studies, that you may be able to speak the things, which become sound doctrine ; showing incorruptness, gravity, sincerity, and sound speech, which cannot, which will not, be condemned, but by those of bad and dangerous principles. Be much in prayer for that wisdom, which is from above. Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Again, I say, take heed unto thyself, as well as unto thy doctrine ; continue in them ; give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear in all things. For in so doing, thou shalt save thyself ; and use those means, which have a tendency to save such, as attend thy ministry. Manifest thy love to the Lord Jesus Christ, by feeding his sheep, and by feeding his lambs, with the sincere milk of the word, that, with spiritual food, they may be nourished up to eternal life.

AGAIN : We charge you, Sir, to administer the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper. These are the visible seals of the covenant of grace. Those who profess their faith in Christ, and obedience unto him, are to be baptized. Baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Ghost, who are equally one God in three persons ; none may object. The infant seed of believers, as they are the lambs of Christ's flock, have a right to the initiating ordinance of baptism. Suffer, then, the little children of visible believers, in this way, to come unto Christ, and forbid them not ; for of such, faith infallibility, is the kingdom of God.

SUCH as are baptized, of regular life and conversation, testifying their belief of the holy scriptures, having knowledge to discern the Lord's body, and desiring to communicate, may not be forbidden coming to the Lord's supper.

FURTHER : We deliver unto you the key of discipline, as well as that of doctrine, to use according to

to the will and command of Christ, with all prudence, tenderness, love and fidelity.

AND seeing you are vested with the authority of a gospel bishop, it is a part of your work to ordain others, when properly called thereto. But see, that you lay hands suddenly on no man; neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure. Send not novices into the Lord's vineyard; nor such as are erroneous, or vicious. But, in the name and fear of God, commit thou the gospel to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

IN fine, Sir, we charge you, before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead, at his appearing and kingdom, and before the elect angels, who doubtless are witnesses of this solemnity, to have respect to all the commandments of divine original. Thus do, as a christian, and as a minister of Christ; and ever let your hearty and humble dependance be fixed on him, both for needed strength and righteousness. In the whole of the arduous, though honourable work, in which you are engaged, strive to approve yourself a wise guide and overseer; a careful and tender shepherd; a vigilant watchman; and a loyal ambassador of the Prince of peace. Be careful to give no offence, in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed.

AND now, *reverend and dear Sir*, if, by the grace of God, you keep the pastoral charge, as given in the Bible, to which you are referred for complete instruction, your reward will be inconceivably great. For when the chief Shepherd shall appear, you will receive a crown of glory, which fadeth not away; and hear, from his blessed mouth, that happyfying plaudit, that beatific euge, Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.

THIS beloved church and congregation will indulge me a moment, while I congratulate them upon
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this joyful occasion. Though it has been a considerable time, since the removal of your former pastor ; yet He, with whom is the residue of the Spirit, has sent you another ; and we hope one after his own heart ; who will feed you with knowledge and understanding ; who will break the bread of life unto you ; and give to each one his portion in due season. May he partake largely of that *wisdom, prudence, and fidelity*, which shone forth with such engaging lustre, in the character of our worthy and beloved friend, his venerable father.* Behold this ascension gift of our dearest Lord !

WE rejoice with you all ! Conduct towards him, as becometh a virtuous and affectionate people. Though he is put into the ministry, being counted faithful ; yet consider he is but a man, clothed with *human* infirmities, and attended with *human* imperfections. Be much in prayer to God for him. Be tender of him. Cheerfully support him, that he may not be embarrassed, but give himself wholly to the business of his sacred department. You, *my brethren*, have the name of being a kind and benevolent people. I doubt not you will continue still to merit this character ; and exercise it, in all its graces towards this, *my young friend*, whom I love as a son, not only for his own sake, but on his deceased father's account ; for whom I had the highest esteem. Strengthen his hands and encourage his heart, by a constant attendance on his public labours, and willing subjection to the laws of Christ. May love to God and love to man, here reign triumphant ! May your light so shine before your sister churches and societies, that all may be led to glorify our heavenly Father ; and know how good, and how pleasant it is, for brethren to dwell together in unity ! AMEN.

* The late Rev. Joseph Palmer, pastor of the congregational church and society in Norton, who departed this life, April 4th, A. D. 1791, in the sixty-second year of his age, and thirty-ninth of his ministry.

THE
Right Hand of Fellowship,

BY THE
Reverend Mr. MOREY,
OF WALPOLE.

TO glorify God, and enjoy him, is deservedly called the chief end of man. For this purpose was he made; to this end was he dignified with reason, and a capacity for religion, together with the unspeakable happiness, which results from the practice of it. To recover man from the ruins of his apostacy; to bring us to glorify the eternal Majesty, and to be happy in the fruition of Him, as our portion, was the grand design of God, in the gift of his Son, and in the arduous undertaking of our great Redeemer, to ransom and save us. To bring us to the true knowledge of God, and our Lord Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent; to excite in us true faith, repentance, and holiness; and to lead us to permanent and complete happiness, as the result of all, is the design of the christian revelation. To serve these important purposes, is the design and tendency of all gospel institutions. To answer these noble purposes, the gospel ministry is particularly and eminently calculated; and as in design, so in effect, through the blessing of God, it hath been found

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greatly serviceable to mankind, in general, and to the church of God, in special. There is, therefore, great cause of thankfulness to the benevolent Author of our holy religion, who, when he had died for our offences, and had risen again for our justification, ascended to heaven, as our prevalent advocate with the Father, and received gifts for men; and hath given as means of his grace to his Church, Apostles, Prophets, and Evangelists—not only so, but pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints; for the work of the ministry; for the edifying the body of Christ: And hath, in his gospel, plainly revealed the order of his house; and doth, in his providence, raise up, qualify, and send forth, labourers into his vineyard. Blessed be God, that we in this land, are not destitute of these precious ascension gifts!

AS gospel ministers have their difficulties and burdens, so they have their comforts also; an eminent instance of which is, the promise of Christ's presence, to be with them to the end of the world. Besides; tokens are to be given them, at their introduction into the sacred office, whereby they may be publicly acknowledged, as the authorized ministers of Christ, and encouraged in their work. For which purpose, giving the RIGHT HAND has been the token in the churches of our Lord, from the Apostolic age, to the present day, of that esteem, affection, and fellowship, which ought to be extended towards the churches of Christ, and to his ministers in particular.

AS the venerable Council, here convened, have appointed me to this service, I do, with a mind full of brotherly regard, in their name, and in that of the churches we represent, reverend and dear Sir, tender you the *social hand*; hereby signifying our satisfaction, as to your pastoral accomplishments, the
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regularity of your call, and the validity of your ordination; and also expressing our readiness to assist you, and the dear flock committed to your watch, to the best of our ability, on all occasions. Thus professing our ardent affection and friendship, we expect the same from you, as occasion shall call.

you will permit me, dear Sir, by the tender ties of friendship and fraternal affection, subsisting between us, to beseech you, to bear in mind the *affectionate and solemn charge*, which hath been now given you; that you continue steadfast in the doctrine, wherein you have been instructed; particularly the same things, which we have committed to you, do you commit unto faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. We cordially wish you much of the promised presence of the great Head of the church; that you may long live, and be a diligent and successful labourer, in this part of our Lord's vineyard, and finally receive the reward of a faithful servant.

WE rejoice with our *brethren* of this church, and the *members* of this christian society, that they and we again behold a light in this golden candlestick. May the light of his doctrine and practice be such, as shall be matter of rejoicing to them, and to us all, as long as he lives, and serve the cause of religion among those who are yet unborn.

Brethren and Beloved,

WE heartily rejoice, that at this day of sad divisions, in many places, you have been so happily united, in the choice of your pastor; and have been so orderly and peaceable, in seeking a resettlement of the gospel ministry among you. This is to be acknowledged, as a smile of heaven upon you, and the societies around you. Be still in care, that brotherly love and peace may continue. This will redound much

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to your honour and comfort, and to the comfort and encouragement of your pastor. We hope you will ever esteem him highly in love, for his work's sake; and evidence the same, especially, by a constant attendance on his ministrations, and fervent prayers for him at the throne of grace. May he and you be helpers of each other's piety and joy, while travelling together, in the journey of life; and, finally, be made joint partakers in that complete holiness and happiness, for which christian ordinances are designed and suited to prepare you, and which are enjoyed in the realms above, by the spirits of just men made perfect.

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